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THE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP OF EARL BORGESON

KENNETH L. PENEGAR*

Before coming to SMU in 1978 to head the Underwood Law Library, Professor Earl Borgeson had headed the library at Harvard Law School for sixteen years, was Associate Director of Stanford University libraries and for a few years worked in the top management of the Los Angeles County Law Library. For ten years at SMU he brought that wealth of experience and his special talents with people, books and institutions to bear on the challenge of moving an already strong law library into the ranks of the premier institutions in this country.

Although our time together here at SMU was short, barely two years, I have learned a great deal from Earl Borgeson. The hallmarks of his leadership are four personal characteristics which he has brought with great effectiveness to his position as Director of the Underwood Law Library and Professor of Law. First, Earl has brought a vision to his role as Director of the Law Library which is probably uncommon but certainly inspiring to those who worked with him. While technically knowledgeable and proficient, Earl's version of the role of Librarian extends far beyond the collection, its processes, support, staffing and arrangement. He sees the Library as a direct expression of a comprehensive ideal about professional education. Namely, it is one in which people (both faculty and students) interact with each other, with a program constantly reviewed and improved, and with materials ready at hand to endow programs with substance and imbue the

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participants with wide knowledge, deep understanding, and inspiration. Accordingly, the Borgeson collection of law school materials included not just statutes, regulations, case reports, loose-leaf services, commentaries, treatises, journals, and a great myriad of other such related professional materials, but also works from the related social sciences and humanities, including political science, sociology, philosophy and literature. The resulting collection and the attitude among the supporting staff which makes the collection possible results in an atmosphere of great breadth and humanizing influence on the study of law.

The second personal characteristic that made Earl so effective in his role as Director is his very effective written and oral communications. This characteristic no doubt stems from a very orderly mind and a desire to make his vision effective by enlisting others in what have to be commonly pursued purposes. The scope and frequency of his written communications certainly became legendary within the quadrangle of SMU Law School. No doubt a very complete history of these years at the School, not limited to the law library itself, could be retold through the plentiful resource of the Borgeson memoranda.

A third characteristic that has made Earl successful is his patient persistence. While he is sensitive to the opinions of others, he is steadfast in pursuit of his own vision for the institution he serves. In and of itself, this particular quality might not have served Earl as well had it not been for the final personal quality that has endeared him to me. And that is his unfailing graciousness. Whatever the context, whether with students, patrons, members of the bar, alumni or not, faculty members, other scholars from around the campus, or members of the general public—Earl was unfailingly and instinctively diplomatic and affable. Qualities like these, while never in overabundance among us human beings, are always a special delight when found in people with genuine authority and responsibility for the common good.

There are three aspects to Professor Borgeson's tenure at SMU for which many of us will best remember him, apart from his personal qualities. He cared a great deal about collection development. Yet, as important as this aspect of the law library's development has been during these ten years, he will be remembered even more for his approach to the services aspect of the law library's operation. Thus, his openness to the library's usage by members of the local bar and other citizens from the community well illustrate the point of his concern about the reach and influence of a fine law library's presence on a university campus. He of course never forgot that his primary users were his fellow faculty members and the students entrusted to our collective charge. The policies and practices from one end of the staff to the other reflected this strong service orientation of the Underwood Law Library.

Finally, I would call attention to Earl Borgeson's considerable presence as a faculty colleague over these years. He was not content to survey the Quad from his perch on the top floor of the Underwood Library building. On the contrary, he actively participated in faculty committees and meetings. He even volunteered himself to run our very fruitful Faculty Forum series for several years. By these means we came to know each other intellectually, by reporting on our works in progress and closely examining one another's scholarship and ideas. It was a natural corollary or a very short extension from this role as faculty colleague to active University citizen on the campus of SMU. Earl not only exhorted his colleagues and students to remember that they are part of a larger learning community, but he also practiced what he preached. He was active in organizations whose membership and purposes span the entire campus. He was supportive of those who reached out in comparable ways and directions. He understood the constraints of university administration while he worked purposefully and aggressively within

those constraints to advance the Underwood Law Library and the welfare of its several constituencies.

Professor Earl Borgeson served with great effect as head of the Underwood Law Library, but he will be remembered for much more. And that memory will continue to inspire all of us who knew him for a very long time to come. In his retirement, we wish for Earl and his family continued success and happiness in all that life has to offer.